

Message Text

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15

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-05 /091 W

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R 060903Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7617

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMCONSUL TANGIER

USMISSION USUN

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

FOSIF ROTA

COMSIXTHFLT

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 0657

USCINCEUR AND CINCUSNAVEUR ALSO FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MO SS SP MR AG TU

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR'S COMMENTS ON TUNISIAN MEDIATION EFFORT

1. TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR BRIEFED ME FEB 5 ON TUNISIAN MEDIATION

EFFORT ON SAHARA. HE SAID TUNISIAN MINISTER OF INTERIOR

BELKHODJA HAD HAD IMPRESSION WHEN MEETING WITH BOUMEDIENE

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AND HIS ADVISERS THAT ALGERIANS WERE SOMEWHAT CONFUSED AS

TO RESULTS THEY DESIRED FROM MEDIATION. ALGERIANS KEPT REITERATING NEED FOR SELF-DETERMINATION IN SAHARA AND HAD ALSO BEEN INSISTENT THAT MOROCCANS SHOULD ACCEPT A CEASEFIRE. ALGERIANS HAD NOT COME UP WITH ANY SPECIFIC PLAUSIBLE NEGOTIATING IDEAS, HOWEVER.

2. DURING MOROCCAN TALKS, BELKHODJA HAD ASKED KING TO CONSIDER STOPPING MILITARY ADVANCE IN SAHARA TO GIVE TIME FOR TALKS, TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR CONTINUED. KING INITIALLY HAD BEEN NEGATIVE ON THIS SUGGESTION BUT LATER AGREED TO SLOW DOWN MOROCCAN FORCES. KING HAD CONTINUED TO INSIST, HOWEVER, THAT MOROCCAN RIGHTS OVER SAHARA NOT NEGOTIABLE. ALGERIANS, KING MAINTAINED, HAD A CHOICE BETWEEN WITHDRAWING GRACEFULLY OR BEING DRIVEN OUT OF SAHARA. MOROCCANS SIMPLY WOULD NOT TOLERATE THEIR REMAINING.

3. TUNISIAN ASSESSMENT FOLLOWING ALGIERS AND RABAT CONTACTS WAS THAT IF MOROCCAN MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SAHARA COULD BE EXTENDED OVER RELATIVELY LONG PERIOD, SOME SORT OF FACE-SAVING FORMULA MIGHT BE FOUND, TUNISIAN AMB. CONCLUDED. TUNISIANS RECOGNIZED THEY WERE NOT THE BEST INTERLOCUTORS, HAVING COME OUT IN FAVOR OF MOROCCO ON SAHARA. THEY DID BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THEY COULD PLAY SOME USEFUL ROLE IN CONJUNCTION WITH OTHER ARAB MEDIATORS, AND HAD ADVANTAGE OVER SYRIANS AND EGYPTIANS THAT THEY UNDERSTOOD THIS PART OF WORLD BETTER. TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR SAW FUTURE MOROCCAN MOVE AGAINST MAHBES AS CUT-OFF POINT AFTER WHICH NEGOTIATION ALONG LINES PRESENTLY BEING PURSUED WOULD PROBABLY NO LONGER BE POSSIBLE. ON BALANCE, TUNISIAN DID NOT BELIEVE NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT WOULD BE EASY IN ANY CASE.

4. TUNISIAN AMB. ALSO SAID THAT BELKHODJA HAD BEEN UNPLEASANTLY SURPRISED AT EXTENT OF SOVIET PRESENCE AT ALGEIRS AIRPORT IN FORM OF NUMEROUS ANTONOV CARGO AIRCRAFT. NEUMANN

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